"To live with respect in Creation..."

It is with considerable embarrassment that I remember my cynicism when the line "to live with respect in Creation" was added to "A New Creed" in 1995. I was deeply attached to the previous version (as if it hadn't already been revised in 1980; but I liked that revision!). I worshipped with a congregation that recited it every week. Besides, what kind of "creed" is open to amendments? I couldn't have been more wrong. I now look back on former moderator Stan McKay's defense of the revision, drawing on the wisdom of Aboriginal spirituality and a deep awareness of the theological significance of the environmental crisis, as prophetic and prescient.

**Creation and Incarnation**
The line functions in parallel to that of the incarnation in the first half of the affirmation. Having confessed our faith in God "who has come in Jesus, the Word made flesh," we now, in the second half, respond by professing our calling "to live with respect in Creation." The link between incarnation and creation is significant. Our mandate for environmental concern is rooted in God's radical revelation in the flesh, which in turn is grounded in God's affirmation of the goodness of Creation. Ours is no gnostic, spiritualized, abstract faith. As George MacLeod, the founder of the Iona Community, liked to say: "Matter matters!"

**The Sacramental Imperative**
Another critical link is here as well. We are called to "celebrate God's presence" and to "live with respect in Creation"—worship and ethics, liturgy and life. And this is no mere tenuous connection or light link. It is integral to who God is, the nature of God's Creation, and our place in it all. There is no other way for us to know of God's presence and action than in and through God's created order. In this sense, the Christian faith takes a deeply "sacramental" view of things. Again, George MacLeod had a pithy way of saying it: "God's Spirit is in every blessed thing!" Or as Lawrence Stookey argues in his work on the Eucharist, all anti-sacramentalism in the church is misguided. I call this the "sacramental imperative."

**Questions, Resources, and a Prayer**
This raises some tough questions for reflection. How often in our worship do we get a concrete and urgent sense that "matter matters"? Where is the stuff of God's good earth in our liturgy? How is it possible that every Christian is not an environmental activist? In a world where someone dies of hunger every 3.5 seconds, why would we not break bread every time we gather for worship out of our longing to be more deeply shaped and moved by this embodiment of Jesus' presence in the world? In the face of a planetary environmental crisis, why is so much "contemporary" worship so anti-sacramental? As I continue to reflect on such questions, I value even more the new resources in Celebrate God's Presence for the "Blessing of Seeds and Soil," the "Blessing of the Fisheries," "For Creation," the "Blessing of Animals," and the "Additional Resources" in the section "To Live with Respect in Creation." (pp. 613-636) Helpful as well is the deep well of resources in the recent "Water in Focus" initiative (see www.united-church.ca/waterfocus). Also, I find myself needing to pray more frequently these lines from an Iona Community communion prayer:

"May we know your presence in the sharing of this bread, so that we may know your touch in all bread, all matter."

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